Space Based Solar Power Study

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ASCEND, August 1, 2024

Office of Technology, Policy, and Strategy

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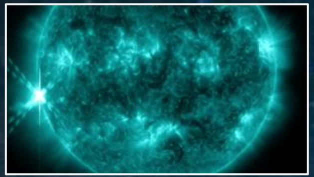
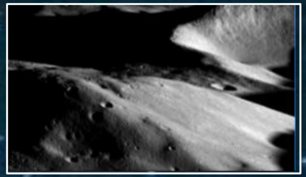


Space-Based Solar Power



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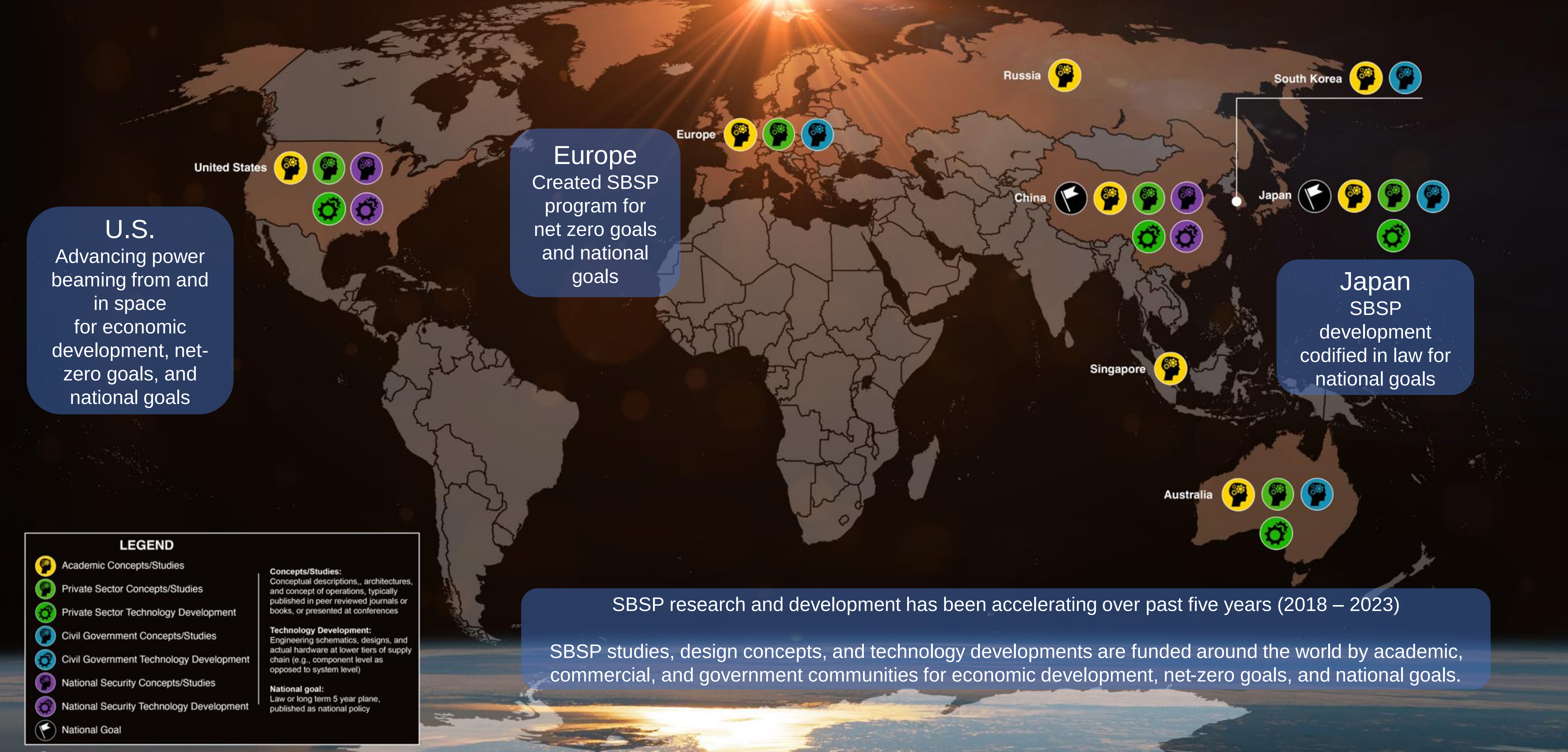
Space Based Solar Power

International Space Based Solar Power Activities

National Aeronautics and Space Administration



U.S.
Advancing power beaming from and in space for economic development, net-zero goals, and national goals

Europe
Created SBSP program for net zero goals and national goals

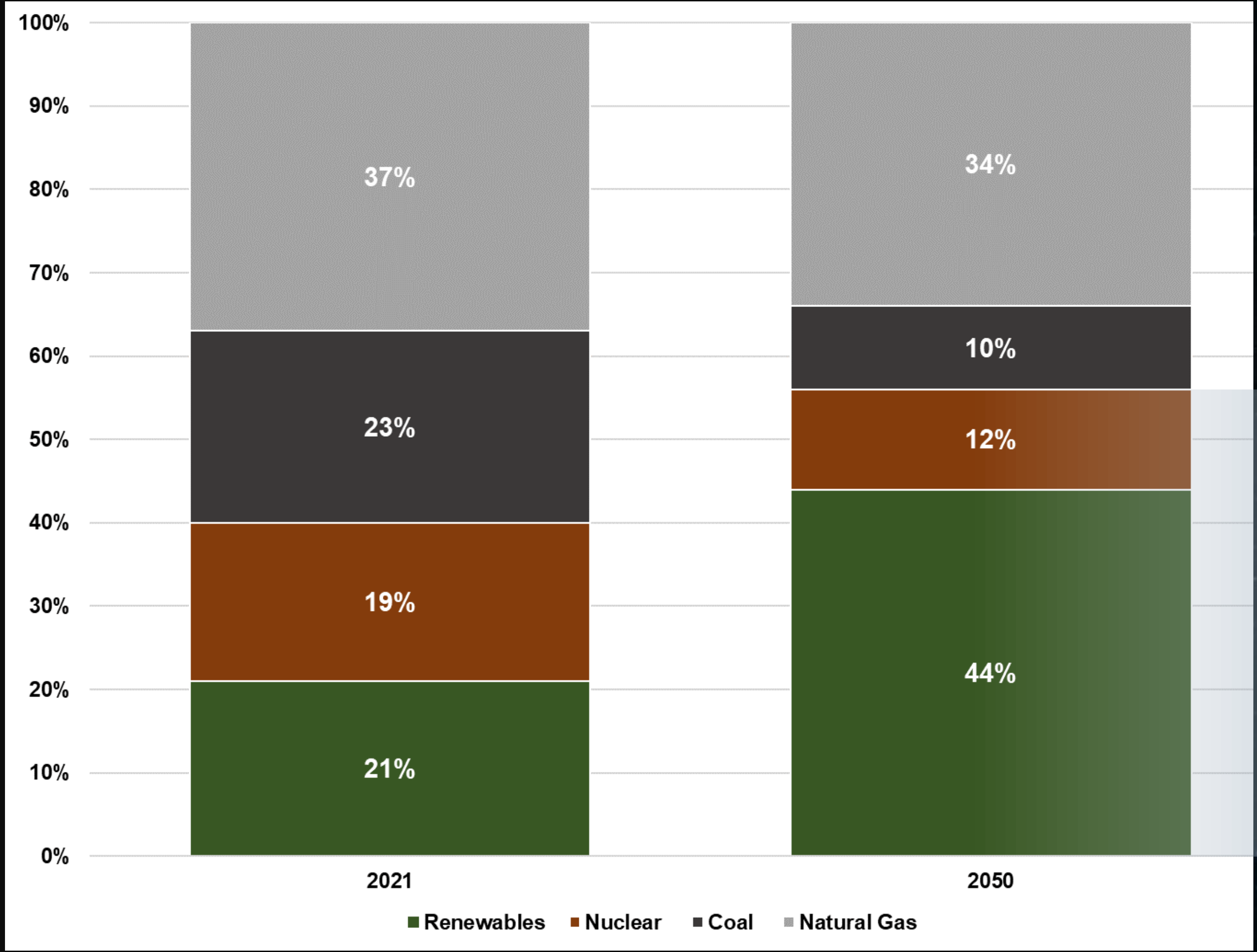
Japan
SBSP development codified in law for national goals

SBSP research and development has been accelerating over past five years (2018 – 2023)

SBSP studies, design concepts, and technology developments are funded around the world by academic, commercial, and government communities for economic development, net-zero goals, and national goals.

Motivation

*"**Net zero** means cutting greenhouse gas emissions to as close to zero as possible, with any remaining emissions re-absorbed from the atmosphere, by oceans and forests for instance."* - United Nations



U.S. Electricity Generation, Energy Information Administration, 2021

- U.S. electric power sector produces 25% of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions – most are CO_2 emissions from coal and natural gas
- Is SBSP a renewable source of electricity generation that can contribute to achieving net zero

U.S. will need to generate 70% of U.S. electricity from renewable sources to reach net-zero by 2050, Bouckaert et al., 2021

U.S is not projected to make this target using current sources of renewable electricity generation

Scope and Study Questions

Why

Purpose: Evaluate the potential benefits, challenges, and options for NASA to engage with growing global interest in space-based solar power (SBSP)

Q1: Under what conditions would SBSP be a competitive option to achieving net zero green house gas emissions compared to alternatives?

Q2: If it can be competitive, what role, if any, should NASA have in SBSP development?

What

Assess two representative designs of SBSP systems. Designs loosely based on existing publicly available designs from 2006 and 2013. First order assessments of first of a kind systems.

Where

Collect solar energy in Geostationary orbit, convert to microwave radiation, transmit energy to Earth, receive on Earth, convert to power, and deliver to power grid.

When

Q1: Launch and assembly begins 2038 - 2043 depending on SBSP design. Initial operations in 2050 until 2080.
Q2: Now

How

The Aerospace Corporation developed initial models. OTPS further developed models then verified and validated models to characterize and estimate costs and climate impact

Guided by stakeholder and subject matter expert feedback and literature: 30+ discussions, 100 documents

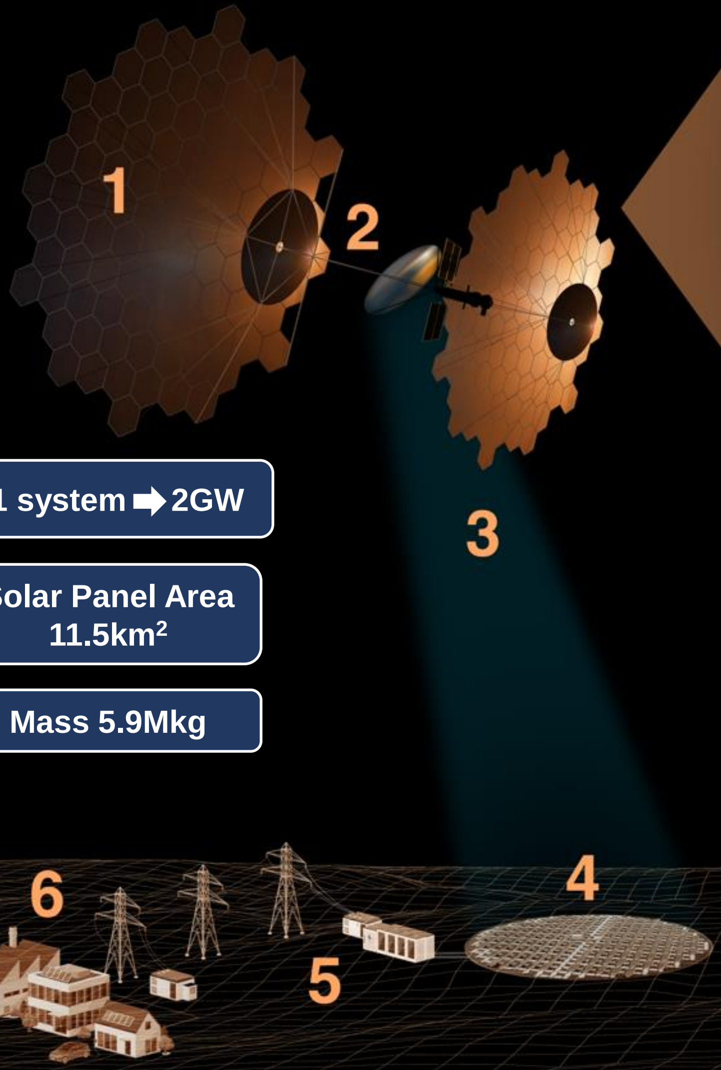
Space Based Solar Power

Functional Diagram

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Systems in GEO Normalized to 2GW

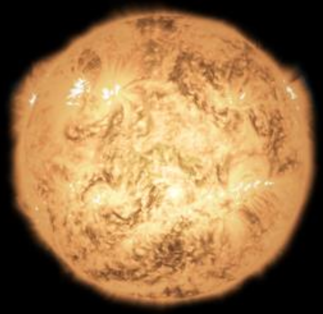
Innovative Heliostat Swarm Concept



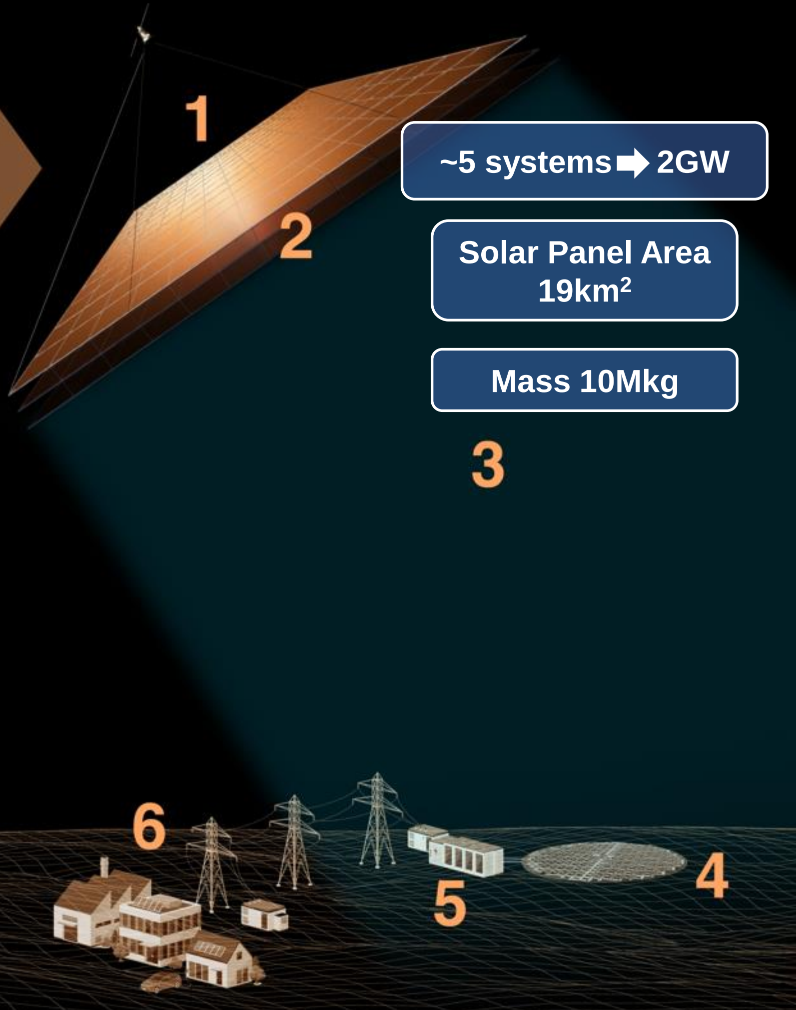
~1 system ➡ 2GW

Solar Panel Area 11.5km^2

Mass 5.9Mkg



Mature Planar Array Concept



~5 systems ➡ 2GW

Solar Panel Area 19km^2

Mass 10Mkg

Space Based Solar Power Functions

1. Collect
Solar panels receive solar energy

2. Convert
Converters turn solar energy into electricity; then into microwave

3. Transmit
Antenna array beams microwave energy to ground station rectennas

4. Receive
Rectenna receives microwave energy

5. Convert
Converters turn microwave energy into electricty

6. Deliver
Final power delivered to homes and businesses

Space Based Solar Power

Representative Design One: Innovative Heliostat Swarm Concept

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

1. Develop

Research and develop technologies

Manufacture SBSP modules

Perform project management, systems engineering, and mission assurance

2030-2042

2. Assemble

Manufacture servicers

Launch SBSP modules and servicers to LEO

Refuel launchers in LEO for orbital transfer to GEO

Assemble SBSP modules in GEO with servicers

Perform mission operations and data analysis to assemble

2042-2050

3. Operate

Construct ground facilities

Perform mission operations and data analysis to operate during service lifetime

2050-2080

4. Maintain

Manufacture replacement SBSP modules and servicers

Launch replacement SBSP modules and servicers to LEO

Refuel launchers in LEO for orbital transfer to GEO

Assemble replacement SBSP modules with replacement servicers in GEO

Perform mission operations and data analysis to maintain

2060-2080

5. Dispose

Manufacture active debris removal spacecraft

Launch active debris removal spacecraft to LEO

Refuel launchers for orbital transfer to GEO

Transfer all SBSP modules from GEO to graveyard orbit with active debris removal spacecraft

Perform mission operations and data analysis to dispose

2060-2085

Upmass, number of modules	5.9M kg, 1.46M modules
Number of launches Total = Assemble + Maintain + Dispose	**2321 =** (59 + 708) + (118 + 1416) + 20

Space Based Solar Power

Representative Design Two: Mature Planar Array

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

1. Develop

Research and develop technologies

Manufacture SBSP modules

Perform project management, systems engineering, and mission assurance

2030-2037

2. Assemble

Manufacture servicers

Launch SBSP modules and servicers to LEO

Refuel launchers in LEO for orbital transfer to GEO

Assemble SBSP modules in GEO with servicers

Perform mission operations and data analysis to assemble

2037-2050

3. Operate

Construct ground facilities

Perform mission operations and data analysis to operate during service lifetime

2050-2080

4. Maintain

Manufacture replacement SBSP modules and servicers

Launch replacement SBSP modules and servicers to LEO

Refuel launchers in LEO for orbital transfer to GEO

Assemble replacement SBSP modules with replacement servicers in GEO

Perform mission operations and data analysis to maintain

2055-2080

5. Dispose

Manufacture active debris removal spacecraft

Launch active debris removal spacecraft to LEO

Refuel launchers for orbital transfer to GEO

Transfer all SBSP modules from GEO to graveyard orbit with active debris removal spacecraft

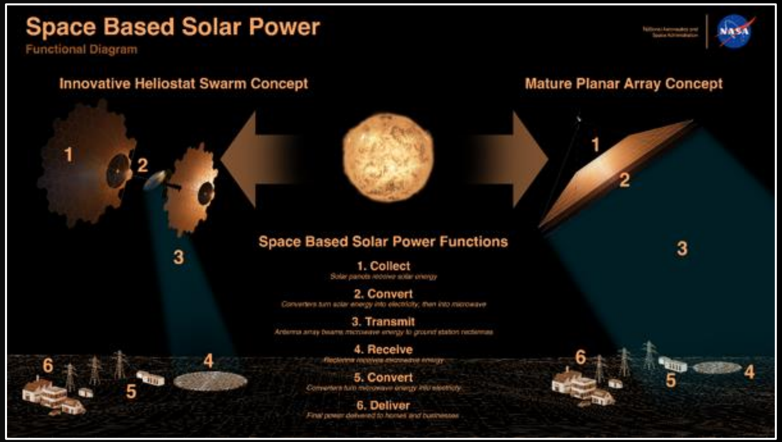
Perform mission operations and data analysis to dispose

2060-2085

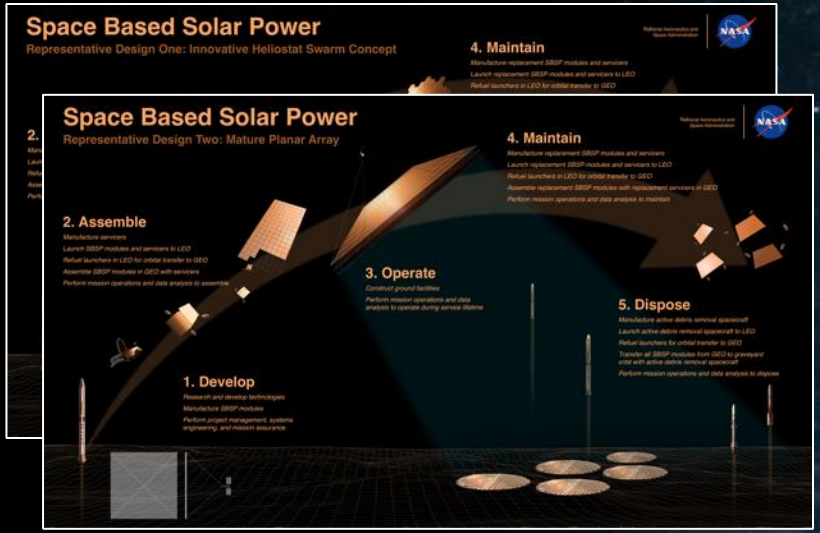
Upmass, number of modules	10M kg, 2M modules
Number of launches (Total = Assemble + Maintain + Dispose)	**3960 =** (101 + 1212) + (201 + 2412) + 34

Methodology

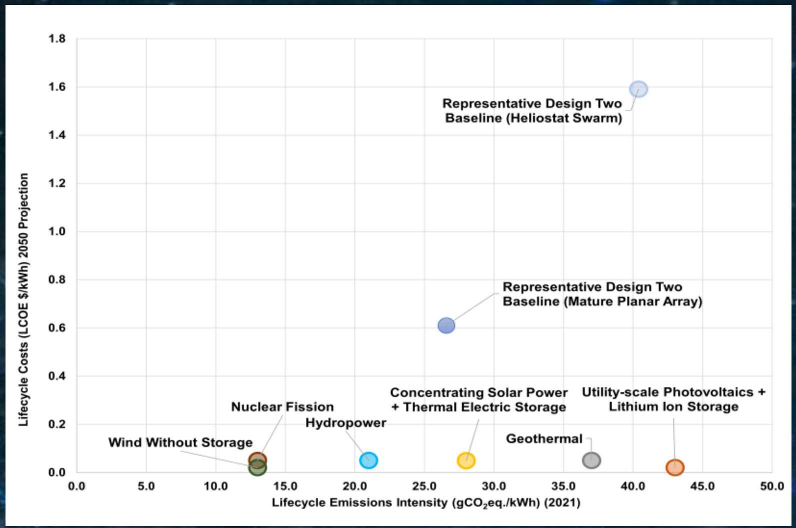
Decomposition → **Lifecycle** → **Output**



- 2 reference designs normalized to 2GW power transmission
- 6 functions: collect, convert, transmit, receive, convert, deliver
- 87 parameters: subsystems that perform six functions



- Arrange 87 parameters into Concept of Operations lifecycle: develop, assemble, operate, maintain, and dispose



- Lifecycle cost to generate electricity vs. Lifecycle emissions intensity to generate electricity
- $/kWh vs. gCO_2 equivalent/kWh

Define baseline assumptions then vary cost and emissions drivers to identify range of outputs

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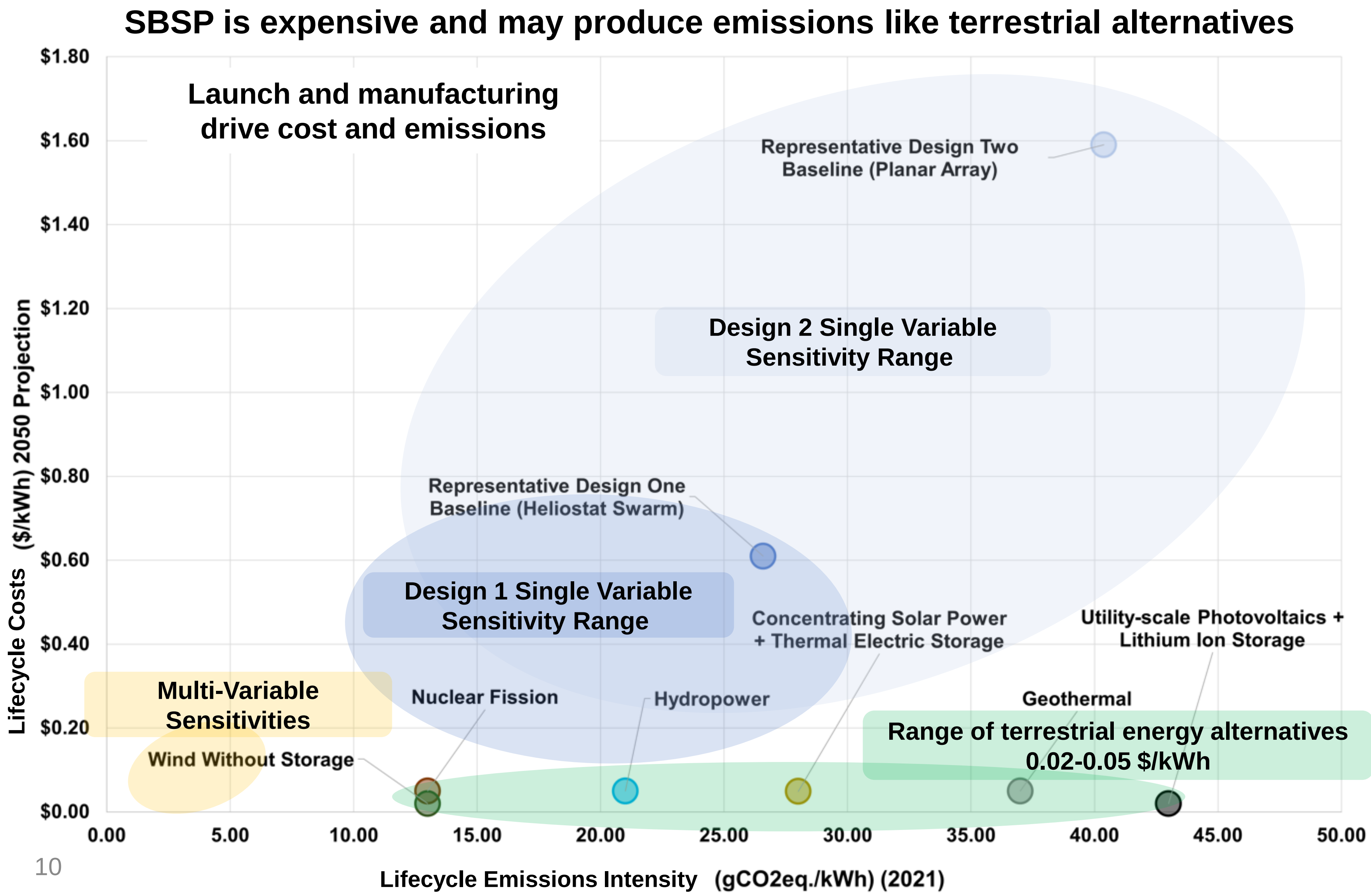
Q1: Under what conditions would SBSP be a competitive option to achieving net zero green house gas emissions compared to alternatives?



Calculate sensitivity range of cost and emissions intensity to generate electricity

BASELINE DESIGNS
Define assumptions for 2050

Not cost competitive
0.61, 1.59 $/kWh;
Similar emissions to some

SENSITIVITY RANGES
Vary cost and emissions drivers

Not cost competitive
0.20, 0.45 $/kWh;
Similar emissions to some

COMBINE SENSITIVITIES
Multi-variable combination of sensitivities

Cost is competitive
0.03, 0.08 $/kWh;
Emissions less than terrestrial

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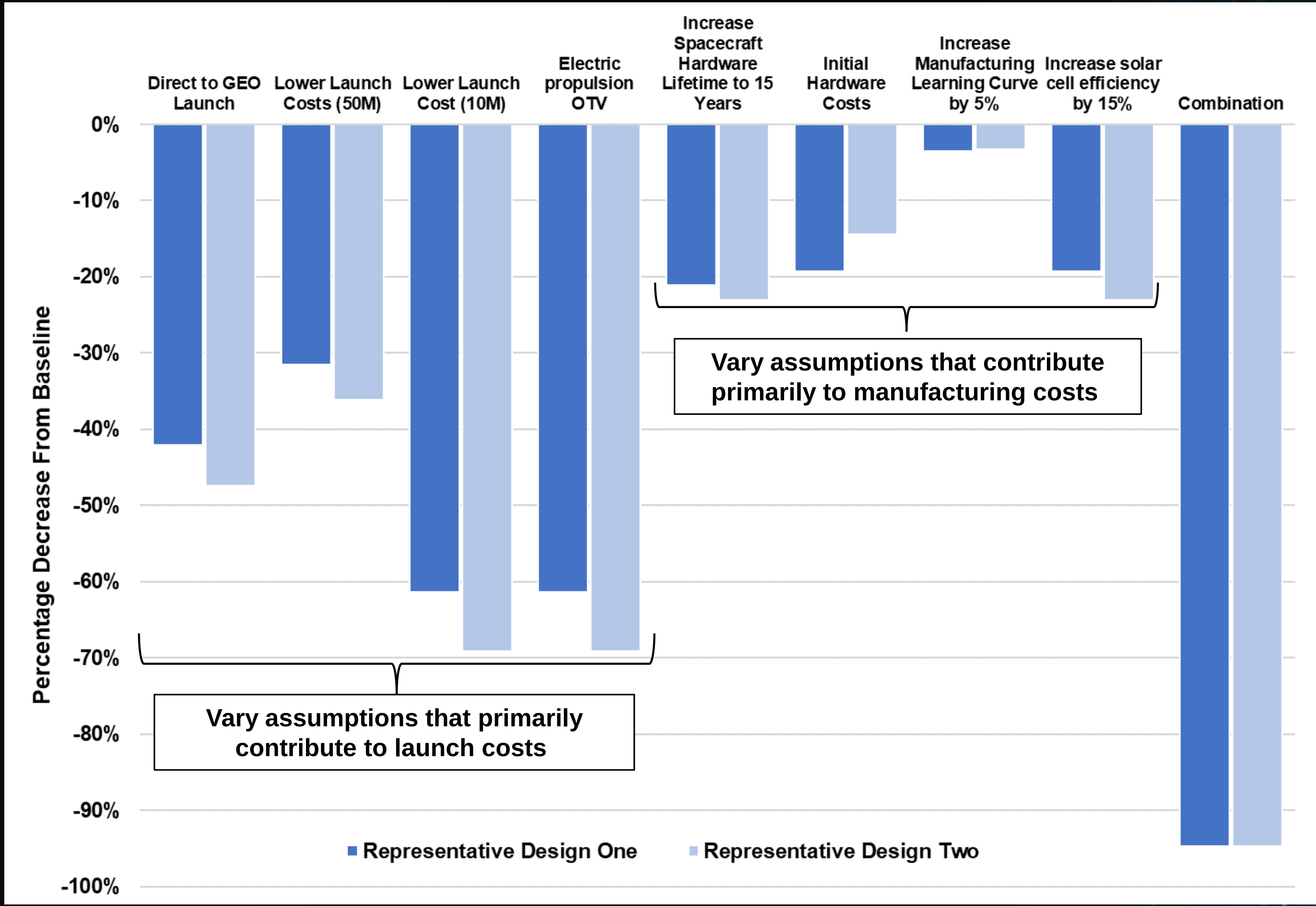
Sensitivity Analysis



Percent decrease in <u>cost</u> from the baseline assumptions

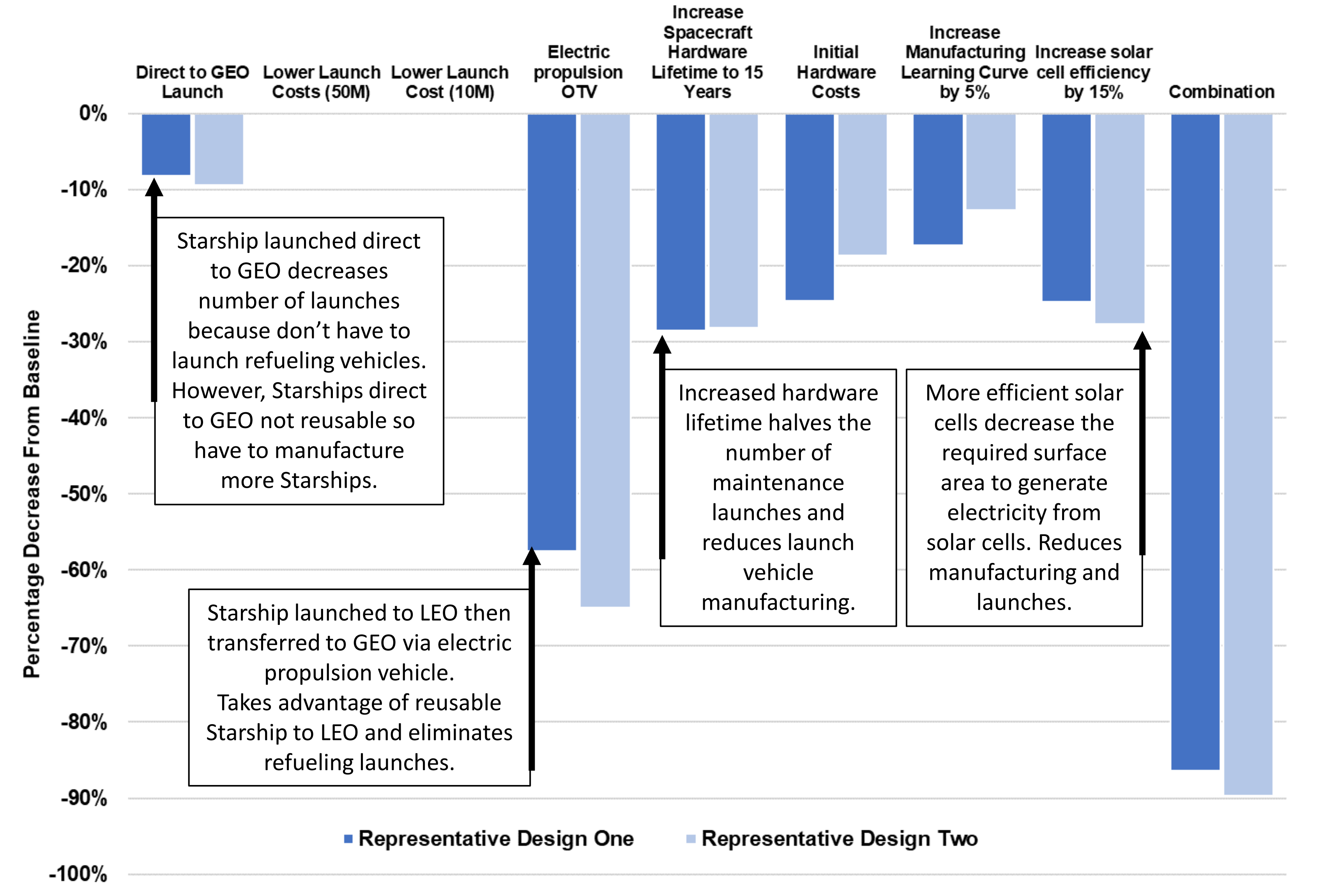
IF

- Launch costs reduced from $100M ($1000/kg) to $50M ($500/kg)
- Use electric propulsion for GEO transfer instead of LEO-refueling
- Solar cell efficiency increased from 35% to 50%
- Hardware lifetime extended from 10 to 15 years
- Servicer and ADR first-unit cost reduced from $1B to $100M and $500M to $50M, respectively
- Manufacturing learning curves improved by 5%

THEN

SBSP performs better on cost and emissions than terrestrial renewable energy production technologies

Sensitivity Analysis



Percent decrease in <u>emissions intensity</u> from the baseline assumptions

IF

- Launch costs reduced from $100M ($1000/kg) to $50M ($500/kg)
- Use electric propulsion for GEO transfer instead of LEO-refueling
- Solar cell efficiency increased from 35% to 50%
- Hardware lifetime extended from 10 to 15 years
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THEN

SBSP performs better on cost and emissions than terrestrial renewable energy production technologies

Q2: If it can be competitive, what role, if any, should NASA have in SBSP development?

NASA is developing technologies to meet future mission needs. These key technologies enable SBSP as a use case. SBSP is not a driver for NASA technology development.

UNDIRECTED ORGANIC DEVELOPMENT

NASA is developing ISAM, autonomy for distributed systems, and power beaming. Continuing to invest in these capabilities will make SBSP systems more technically feasible in the future. This requires no change to current investments.

PURSUE NEW PARTNERSHIPS

NASA could become a SBSP technology development partner with other government agencies, industry, academia, or international partners. Partnering may offer impactful and cost-saving opportunities for the agency and SBSP's future development.

In either approach, we recommend deep-dive studies of SBSP every few years, and near-term follow-on studies for mission applicability

Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges to operational system development

1. Large-scale ISAM needed for Assembly and Maintenance ConOps phases and many technologies are untested
2. Large scale autonomous distributed systems across km in GEO needed for Assembly, Operations, and Maintenance ConOps phases
3. Power beaming from space to ground is nascent and was demonstrated from LEO in 2023

Challenges to reducing system costs

1. Starship launch cost of $50M may not be reached by 2050
2. Manufacturing at scale will be required to lower manufacturing costs in the Development ConOps phase
3. Launch cadence needed for Assembly and Maintenance ConOps phases may not be realized due to competing demands for Starships

Regulatory and other challenges

1. Active removal of SBSP debris to graveyard orbit may not be the best option in 2050
2. Spectrum allocation is finite and subject to regulation
3. Orbital slot allocations are increasingly contested and require prior planning for SBSP systems
4. Security requirements to ensure infrastructure and operations like terrestrial power plants

Conclusion

Purpose: Evaluate the potential benefits, challenges, and options for NASA to engage with growing global interest in space-based solar power (SBSP)

Q1: Under what conditions would SBSP be a competitive option to achieving net zero green house gas emissions compared to alternatives?

Q2: If it can be competitive, what role, if any, should NASA have in SBSP development?

Evaluated two representative designs

Q1

- SBSP is expensive and not cost competitive with terrestrial renewable electricity production
- SBSP provides limited benefit to climate and partially competitive with terrestrial renewable electricity production
- Combination of lower launch costs, improved manufacturing at scale, increased solar cell efficiency, longer hardware lifetime, and electric propulsion orbital transfers vehicles lead to SBSP that is cost and climate competitive with terrestrial renewable electricity production

Q2

- Option 1: Maintain the status quo, NASA continues to invest in capabilities for NASA missions that also enable SBSP
- Option 2: Pursue new partnerships, NASA could partner with entity that is pursuing SBSP capabilities

Further study is required to assess SBSP's terrestrial use-cases in more detail or for NASA-specific use-cases

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Questions?

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